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## Article

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# Does psychological contract fulfilment determine employees' work engagement? Empirical evidence from government sector employees

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## ABSTRACT

People's engagement and success at work depend heavily on the psychological contract. Professionals must design strategies to manage employee expectations effectively. This study examined how employee work engagement is influenced by transactional and relational psychological contract fulfillment. To fulfill its objectives, this research utilized a quantitative approach and an explanatory research design. A total of 315 government employees made up the population under study, and 177 responses were included in the sample size using the sample size determination formula. This investigation used both primary and secondary data sources, as well as correlation and regression analysis, to investigate the correlation and influence of independent variables on the dependent variable, employee engagement. Psychological contract fulfillment and employee engagement in the researched area were shown to be positively and significantly correlated in this study. Moreover, employee engagement is positively and significantly affected by both relational and transactional psychological contract fulfillment. The theoretical implications of the study underscore the need to incorporate cultural and contextual factors, as per social exchange theory, in understanding psychological contracts and employee engagement in Ethiopia. Practically, this study contributes by providing valuable insights for organizational leaders and policymakers to enhance work engagement and organizational effectiveness within diverse cultural contexts.

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psychological contract

## SUBJECTS

Business, Management  
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Resource Management;  
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Leadership

## Introduction

Globally, empirical research on psychological contracts has increased in the past few years. The need for research stems from how the psychological contract is evolving as a result of downsizing, technology, and global competitiveness (Alcover et al., 2017). Any organization that hires someone has some formal agreements made when they start working there that set expectations for both the employer and the employee. A lot of workers don't know they are parties to another contract that hasn't been recorded or revealed to their employer. A psychological contract is a type of work contract. Currently, in theory, the meaning of the psychological contract has not been proven (Guest, 1998), however, the majority of academics believe it to be a sort of psychological agreement between two people in which perceived commitment and responsibility are traded.

This study utilized Social Exchange Theory as the benchmark for comprehending psychological contracts. According to the theory, people participate in social interactions expecting to gain advantages and rewards for their contributions. In the context of the workplace, employees form implicit agreements with their organizations based on mutual obligations and reciprocity. These agreements form the basis

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of the psychological contract, influencing employees' perceptions, behaviors, and results. Social Exchange Theory helps elucidate the dynamics of trust, commitment, and perceived fairness within the employment relationship, shaping the advancement and fulfillment of psychological contracts (Blau, 1964).

Social exchange theory is a theoretical framework that helps elaborate the dynamics of social relationships, including the formation and maintenance of psychological contracts. Social exchange theory states that people interact with one another in the hopes of maximizing rewards and benefits while lowering expenses and potential risks. Within the framework of psychological contracts, social exchange theory suggests that employees form implicit agreements with their organizations regarding mutual obligations and expectations. These psychological contracts are subjective beliefs and perceptions about the work relationship's terms and circumstances, including the reciprocal obligations and promises between employees and employers (Rousseau, 1989).

According to Jha et al. (2019) research findings, workers' perceptions of units' investments in their professional development and the improvement of their psychological contracts (relational and transactional) may have had a positive impact on their work engagement. Additionally, the outcome reveals that job engagement and perceived investment in employee expectations are positively moderated by a relational contract as opposed to a transactional contract.

According to the findings of Kasekende's (2017) study, employee discretionary behaviors were positively correlated with responsibilities to employers, employee responsibilities, and the state of the psychological contract. Additionally, it was discovered that employee involvement acted as a partial mediator between the psychological contract's status, employer and employee obligations, and the discretionary behaviors of supervisory and subordinate staff. Sheehan et al. (2019) showed that intentions to leave the nursing profession were adversely correlated with fulfilling promises related to stimulating job content and social climate; these associations were mediated by involvement. Promises of financial gain, work-life balance, and professional growth not being met were not linked to plans to leave the nursing field.

This study examined the relationship between psychological contract fulfillment and employee engagement, the dependent variable, in an explanatory manner. There were two different literary strains used as a theoretical framework. The first body of literature for the current study is on employee engagement since it is vital to comprehend the historical context and consequences of this type of work. Fulfilling psychological contracts is the second theoretical element.

### ***Justifications and observed gaps***

In the context of developing countries, Ethiopia, where cultural values, societal norms, and economic conditions may differ from those in developed countries context where a lot of the existing literature on psychological contracts originates, there is a need to explore how these contextual factors shape the formation, fulfillment, and consequences of psychological contracts. Social exchange theory suggests that cultural norms, organizational practices, and socio-economic conditions influence individuals' perceptions of reciprocity, fairness, and trust within the working connection. Therefore, the application of social exchange theory helps to frame the research gap by highlighting the merit of understanding the unique contextual factors that influence psychological contracts and employee engagement within government sectors in Ethiopia.

Hence, in the realm of psychological contracts and employee work engagement, significant research gaps persist, particularly within government sectors in Ethiopia. Despite extensive literature in organizational psychology, limited attention has been devoted to understanding these dynamics in such contexts. One glaring gap lies in the specificity of the context: few studies delve into how cultural, social, and economic factors unique to regions in Ethiopia's public sectors influence psychological contract fulfillment and work engagement. Moreover, existing research often isolates transactional or relational psychological contracts for examination, overlooking the interplay between these dimensions and their joint impact on employee views and behaviors. Additionally, the researchers are motivated to perform this investigation by the presence of a gap in the literature and the need to fill these gaps in the study. To begin, as stated in the empirical review section, different studies have come to different conclusions concerning the psychological contract and employee engagement. Investigating such complexities would deepen our understanding and enrich both theoretical frameworks and practical implications for

organizational leaders aiming to bolster employee engagement and organizational effectiveness within government sectors. Therefore this study is designed to fill the aforementioned gaps by examining psychological contract influences on employee engagement: An empirical investigation in Ethiopian Public sector, Mersa town.

### **Objectives of the study**

1. To measure how employee engagement is affected by transactional psychological contract fulfillment.
2. To analyze the impact of relational psychological contract fulfillment on employee engagement.
3. To evaluate the level of employee engagement in the study area and forward possible recommendations.

## **Literature review**

### **Psychological contract and work engagement**

According to Bakker and Schaufeli (2008), One of the most studied concepts in positive organizational behavioral research is work engagement, which is considered the opposite of job exhaustion and represents a happy, contented, and work-related mental state. Engagement refers to “a positive, fulfilling work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption” (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). Employees who are involved in their work are more driven and work extremely hard. They find it hard to alienate themselves from their work, thus they are completely absorbed in it (Bakker et al., 2008). Further explaining the positive association between psychological contract and engagement, psychological contract and perceived organizational support operate as mediators in the relationship between engagement and distributive justice. (Bhatnagar & Biswas, 2010). An employee’s psychological contract can be used to forecast their engagement (Bhatnagar & Biswas, 2010). The relationship between engagement and developmental human resource management is adjudicated by the psychological (relational) contract. From the organization’s standpoint, developmental HRM offers long-term assistance that helps to forge a bond between employee and employer, fortify the psychological (relational) contract, and encourage employees to respond by raising their level of engagement (Bal et al., 2013).

### **Psychological contract**

According to Argyris (1960), the psychological contract represents implied consent among a team of workers and their supervisor. He contended that this relationship could come to the point where employees would offer increased productivity and reduced complaints in exchange for fair wages and job stability (Taylor & Tekleab, 2004). Argyris (1960), held the belief that employees would excel if the organization refrained from excessive interference with the norms established by the employee group. So that, employees would acknowledge the organization’s right to progress. This initial, clear understanding of the psychological contract was characterized by a mutually agreed-upon exchange of concrete, particular, and mostly financial resources that allowed for the satisfaction of each party’s requirements.

Following this, Levinson et al. (1962), presented a detailed intricate understanding of the psychological contract, greatly affected by Menninger’s (1958) research. Menninger (1958) suggested that contractual interactions include the exchange of immaterial aspects in addition to tangible resources. Furthermore, there must be benefits to both parties from their interactions. Levinson et al. (1962) discovered through their study the significance of mutual exchange and the impact on expected fulfillment of expectations. Their findings underscored that by prioritizing the fulfillment of needs, a dynamic emerged where employees endeavored to meet the organization’s needs if the organization reciprocated by fulfilling the employees’ needs.

Argyris (1960) offered the most limited perspective of the psychological contract, particularly in terms of its concentration on real assets. Conversely, Levinson et al. (1962) and Schein (1965), expanded the scope by considering both tangible and intangible resources within the exchange. Additionally, while

both (Levinson et al., 1962; Schein, 1965) imagined the psychological contract as involving expectations, Levinson et al. (1962) perceived these anticipations as possessing an obligatory nature, where each party feels a sense of duty to fulfill them.

Scholars claim that a psychological contract is personal because it is based on the employee's understanding of the obligations that the company has to fulfill (Bellou, 2009; Rousseau, 1995). This contract, according to Rousseau (1989), becomes a crucial part of the connection between the employee and the organization since it affects how the individual performs at work. According to Rousseau, the establishment of the psychological contract was indicated by the organization offering a benefit or money in exchange for the worker's pledge to provide something in return. This initial exchange is exemplified by the first encounter that takes place between a company and a job candidate, during which the applicant receives and accepts a job offer.

The employee frequently believes that the commitments and considerations are personal and that the contract is fulfilled in honesty, equity, and confidence. When an employer pays an employee to carry out a collection of duties, the recruiting manager takes it for granted that the candidate has been truthful in how they have described their skills and abilities to carry out a certain role in the business. This first promise and consideration exchange establishes the relationship between the employee and the corporation.

### ***Psychological contract and social exchange theory***

Both psychological contract theory and social exchange theory offer useful frameworks for comprehending the dynamics of relationships inside businesses. According to social exchange theory, people interact in a reciprocal manner, weighing the advantages and disadvantages of their contributions in relation to the benefits they obtain. In a similar vein, the psychological contract theory emphasizes aspects like mutual understanding, trust, and justice as well as the implicit commitments and expectations that form the employee-employer relationship (Rousseau, 1989). Parallel to and apart from the initial advancements of psychological contracts, the pioneering works of Homans (1958), (Blau, 1964), and (Settoon et al., 1996) marked the emergence of social exchange theory. These works were influenced by earlier studies (Malinowski, 2013; Nord, 1973). Homans (1958), laid out a foundational theory of exchange within group interactions (Coyle-Shapiro & Conway, 2005), which was further explained by Blau (1964).

The significance of perceived fairness and reciprocity in preserving positive organizational connections is emphasized by both theories. Although social exchange theory emphasizes the sharing of resources and labor in exchange for benefits, psychological contract theory explores the unsaid but potent expectations and beliefs between parties that shape the work relationship. When combined, these ideas provide an understanding of how people and organizations manage relationships, settle disputes over expectations, and promote commitment and mutual satisfaction at work (Rousseau, 1989). Therefore, this study focus is directed towards the contributions of Blau (1964) and (Settoon et al., 1996), whose collective efforts epitomize the fundamental principles of social exchange theory.

## **Independent variables (IV)**

### ***Transactional psychological contracts***

According to Rousseau (2000), transactional contracts are brief, mostly focused on material benefits, and have a limited range of use. Based on Rousseau (1995), Transactional contracts have clear performance terms and a finite duration. It is present when there is a short-term employment agreement with limited involvement in the organization, a clear explanation of roles and obligations, and a primary focus on the exchange of labor rather than money. This is especially true for staff who are based off-site and those hired on temporary contracts. Usually, these kinds of partnerships arise from consistent, voluntary interactions. Additionally, they frequently permit a higher degree of resilience for variations in the exchange relationship's dynamic and have an open-ended temporal horizon for exchange that takes into account less of the other party's actions (Morrison & Robinson, 1997).



### **Relational psychological contracts**

Relational contracts have a longer lifespan, are centered around less material rewards, and are based on the personal views of each party (Rousseau, 1995; Rousseau, 2000). Knowing which kind of relationship applies in each situation is vital. An employer may propose a relational contract, but workers insist on a transactional one, leading to misunderstandings inside the company. Of course, neither employers nor employees would use this phrase, but conceptually it helps to grasp the nature of PCs. The psychological contract, according to Rousseau and Schalk (2000) and (Thomas et al., 2003), is adaptable to different aspects of society, and its content can alter when those aspects of one civilization change differ from those of another. Open-ended memberships known as relational contracts have vague or inadequate execution requirements that need to be fulfilled in order to keep affiliation. Their origins stem from extended work agreements founded on reciprocal fidelity and trust. Seniority is the primary factor that drives career advancement and compensation; other bonuses and awards are only tangentially linked to job performance. Extended membership and involvement in the organization are the basis for the contract. Family-run businesses in India frequently use this kind of contract since the majority of the senior supervisory jobs within the company are handled by “trusted and loyal” personnel (Rousseau, 1995).

### **Dependent variable (DV)**

#### **Employee engagement**

Truss et al. (2007) employee engagement is merely having a passion for what one does for a living; this psychological state is thought to include all three of the engagement elements covered by Kahn (1990; Rabiul et al., 2023) this highlights the similar theme that unites all of these definitions, although it is known and accepted that employee engagement is a complex concept, as previously indicated by Kahn (1990). Employee engagement, according to Kahn (1990), is “the connection of organization members’ selves to their work roles; in engagement, people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performances.” Employees’ opinions about the organization, its executives, and the working environment are addressed by the cognitive part of employee engagement. Employee views toward the company and its leaders, as well as their feelings toward each of those three elements, are the main topics of the emotional component. The physical efforts people make to fulfill their duties are related to the physical aspect of employee engagement.

Kahn (1990) defined engagement as the act of taking on and carrying out an organizational duty that requires both psychological and physical presence. According to Saks (2006), there are differences between organizational commitment and engagement. The former pertains to an individual’s attitude and feeling of loyalty to their company, whereas the latter may be more broadly defined to include an individual’s degree of attention on their work and role immersion.

Kahn (1990), was the first noteworthy study on the topic. It’s worth noting that early conversations about engagement were often focused on disengagement, especially concerning workplace stress research and its effects on labor turnover and absenteeism. For an employee to be fully engaged, they must meet all requirements. Engaged people are those who are psychologically present, entirely present, paying attention, emotionally connected, integrated, and intent on playing their roles. They are kind, committed to hard work, and focused on doing their tasks to the best of their abilities. Job engagement is influenced by a variety of elements, including a manageable workload, choices and control, and appropriate acknowledgment. The assumption made by the employee that they can contribute to the organization via dedication, support, initiative, making the most use of their skills, and dedication to the company’s mission and core values is a constant indicator of engagement. Employees who are engaged give their all to their role and the organization as a whole, feeling that they belong there.

### **Empirical reviews**

It was shown that there was a negative association between intentions to leave the nursing profession and the fulfillment of promises about an appealing job and social environment. According to Sheehan

et al. (2019), there is a negative correlation between intentions to leave the nursing profession and the fulfillment of promises connected to an appealing job content and social environment. This correlation is mediated by engagement.

According to Kasekende (2017), the results of the study showed a favorable correlation between employee discretionary behaviors and the status of the psychological contract, employee obligations, and employer obligations. Employee involvement was also shown to be somewhat mediating the state of the psychological contract, discretionary acts by subordinate and supervisory people, and employer obligations. Rahman et al. (2017), demonstrate that employees' contextual performance and job happiness are positively correlated with work engagement and the relational psychological contract. Moreover, the existence of team orientation has improved direct interactions.

van Den Heuvel et al. (2017), offers a paradigm that can assist management in reducing employee turnover and promoting positive changes in emotional, behavioral, and cognitive engagement. In this regard, meeting psychological contracts with employees and encouraging engagement is crucial, as is continuously observing whether information about organizational change is communicated in a timely, appropriate, and useful manner and whether it responds to inquiries from staff members regarding the change.

Jha et al. (2019), looked at the moderating effects of psychological contracts on the work engagement of liquid knowledge workers and the perceived investment in employees' growth. 134 liquid knowledge professionals were given a questionnaire made up of pre-established scales. The model was further examined using the Process macro to look for direct and moderating effects after convergent and discriminant validity were demonstrated using structural equation modeling. Conclusions The results of their study indicate that liquid knowledge workers' work engagement level was positively impacted by CPD units' perceived investments in psychological contract enhancement (transactional and relational) and employee development. The study also reveals that the association between work engagement and perceived investment in employee development is positively moderated by relational contracts rather than transactional contracts.

In order to accomplish that, research by Chan (2021), investigated "The interplay between relational and transactional psychological contracts and burnout and engagement." Semi-structured interviews with twenty Australian and twenty Malaysian university academics were conducted using a qualitative methodology. The analysis's first findings showed that academic contracts in Malaysia were mainly more relational, whilst those in Australia were mainly more transactional. Second, it was discovered that both Australian and Malaysian scholars found the relationship between individual relational and transactional contracts and experiences of burnout and engagement to be only somewhat clear. The results also showed that there were direct and indirect influences to explain the interaction.

In a research paper titled "Work Engagement, Psychological Contract Breach, and Job Satisfaction," Rayton and Yalabik (2014), expanded upon the Social Exchange Theory and the Job Demands–Resources model. They investigated the connection between work engagement and psychological contract breach (PCB) while integrating job satisfaction into this dynamic exchange relationship. We contend that PCB is an indicator of workers' sentiments of resource depletion and that these sentiments influence job satisfaction, which in turn affects work engagement. Thus, it is possible to think of employee labor engagement levels as a form of compensation for the employers' exchange of content. They applied structural equation modeling to longitudinal survey data collected from 191 workers, and their findings indicate that job satisfaction functions as a mediating factor in the detrimental impact of PCB on work engagement.

Another study, "Does Team Orientation Matter?," was carried out by Rahman et al. (2017). Linking Work Engagement and Relational Psychological Contract with Performance" in order to accomplish this goal. To do this, they used simple random sampling and self-administered questionnaires to gather information from 380 workers in the banking and insurance industries. Their results show that employees' contextual performance and job happiness are positively correlated with work engagement and relational psychological contracts. Additionally, the impact of team orientation on direct existing ties is amplified.

Bravo et al. (2019), In this study, a sample of National Collegiate Athletic Association coaches' three work attitudes—job satisfaction, emotional commitment, and turnover intention—were compared to the psychological contract. By analyzing coaches' assessments of the purposeful and inadvertent breach, this study also investigated the moderating function of the psychological contract. The survey had



questions about job satisfaction, affective commitment, turnover intention, and transactional and relational psychological contracts. A total of 383 coaches answered the questionnaire. Affective commitment was found to be negatively impacted by the transactional contract, although work satisfaction was found to be positively affected. Conversely, emotional commitment and job satisfaction were positively impacted by the relational contract. While affective commitment had no discernible effect on turnover intention, job satisfaction had a positive relationship with affective commitment, which in turn had a negative relationship with turnover intention.

In their study, Knapp et al. (2020) explored the social-cognitive theory of numerous psychological contracts. Generally speaking, psychological contracts are seen as the terms of trade that an employee perceives with their employer. They forecast how these contracts' contents—which may be relational, transactional, balanced, or ideological—may change over time and how they will do so dynamically. Taken together, these hypotheses contribute to the understanding of how individual attitudes and behaviors vary among psychological contracts and the trading interactions they regulate. This work offers a basic framework upon which future research might be expanded to a more extensive body of work.

According to Liu et al. (2020), the psychological contract fulfillment of gig workers affects how well they perform their tasks in the sharing economy. This is seen from the perspective of organizational identification mediation and length of service moderation. Based on the social exchange theory, 223 drivers for Didi, a ride-hailing service in China, were selected as samples. The findings demonstrate that the job performance of gig workers can be influenced both directly by transactional and relational psychological contract fulfillment, as well as indirectly through organizational identity. The association between organizational identification and relational psychological contract is the same for both groups, according to the data. Both groups' task performance is significantly impacted by transactional psychological contract fulfillment. On the other hand, Didi drivers who have been with the company for a long time are more affected by relational psychological contract fulfillment than drivers who joined within a year.

### **Conceptual framework**

The researchers established this conceptual framework after analyzing several theoretical and empirical literature on dependent and independent variables, as depicted in Figure 1.

### **Hypothesis development**

Based on the previous theoretical and empirical reviews the following research hypotheses aligned with the identified predictors of psychological contract and employee engagement were developed.

**Ha1:** Transactional psychological contract has a significant and positive effect on employee engagement

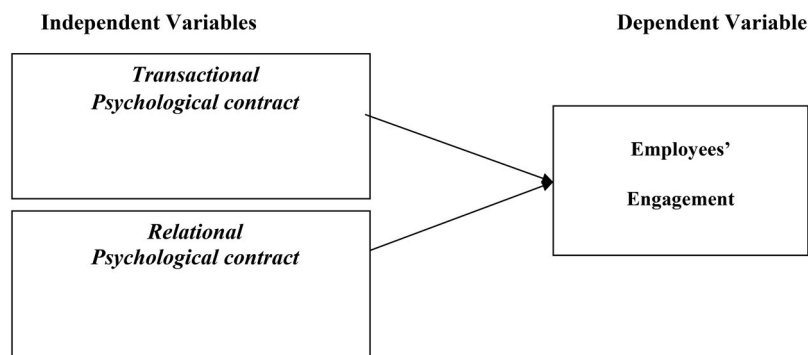
**Ha2:** Relational psychological contract has a significant and positive effect on employee engagement

### **The current study**

The major objective of this investigation was to examine the effect of psychological contract fulfillment on employee engagement in a selected municipal administration civil service office. General conclusions and suggestions are formed from the study's overall findings.

### **Methods**

This study employed an explanatory research design to analyze the effects of relational and transactional psychological contract fulfillment on employee engagement in the study area and to determine the independent variable most influencing engagement. It first used a quantitative research approach to provide statistical generalizations about the variation in employee engagement with psychological contract fulfillment. The purpose of the study is to investigate the relationships between the independent factors and employee engagement. It does this by utilizing theories and hypotheses to discuss the relationship between



**Figure 1.** Conceptual framework.  
 Source: Developed by the researchers.

two or more variables. The target population of the study was all selected Mersa civil service office employees in municipal administration with a total number of 315 and 177 employees made up the sample size based on the (Yamane, 1973) formula ( $n = N / (1 + Ne^2)$ ). The estimated confidence level (95%) with a 5% degree of precision was applied in this study. The sample selection criteria for this study were followed to pick respondents based on their office or work division. To minimize the possibility of choosing respondents from the same division and to minimize sample bias, the researcher applied probability sampling techniques that are stratified with random sampling techniques. This study obtained verbal informed consent from participants for data collection, and inferential statistics, including regression analysis and correlation, were applied to the data to determine the causal connection between the variables under investigation.

### **Materials/instruments**

To determine the association between the dependent and independent variables, respondents were given self-administered, and standardized questionnaires to complete. The variation in employee engagement as well as the influence of relational and transactional contracts on this dependent variable in the research area were examined using this instrument. The study's questionnaire was split into two sections: the first, which had 17 items, focused on transactional psychological contracts, and the second, which had 12 items, dealt with employee engagement. Our research was conducted in Amharic Language and then used for data collection, analysis, and reporting]. To address potential language barriers and ensure consistency across respondents, the original questionnaires were translated from English to Amharic by experienced bilingual professionals proficient in both languages. The translated questionnaires underwent a rigorous validation process to assess their reliability, validity, and cultural appropriateness for the target population through pilot testing with a sample of government sector employees to identify any ambiguities, inconsistencies, or cultural sensitivities in the translated instruments. Feedback from pilot participants was carefully reviewed, and necessary revisions were made to enhance the clarity and relevance of the questionnaires.

### **Measures of dependent variable (employee engagement)**

In this study, Gallup's 12 questions and Likert scale questions with responses ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5) were used to measure employee engagement. Gallup's 12 standard items were used to create an employee engagement questionnaire with a few minor changes.

### **Measures of independent variables (relational and transactional psychological contract)**

The 17-item condensed Psychological Contract Scale (PCS) of Millward and Hopkins (1998), was used to measure the independent variable of psychological contract fulfillment. The psychological contract relational (7 items) and transactional (10 items) contracts were evaluated using this scale. Every item was

presented as a statement with two transactional and relationship aspects, and a seven-point Likert scale response range (from 7-strongly agree to 1-strongly disagree). The scale and its subscales have internal reliability, according to study data. Thus, the measurement scale chosen by the study was determined by the evaluation of many theoretical and empirical work reviews.

## Results and discussion

### Correlational analysis

The fundamental purpose of a Pearson correlation analysis is to examine the relationship between the dependent and independent variables in the research. The Pearson correlation analysis table result in the next section demonstrates the analysis conclusions about how strongly those dependent and independent variables are related. The Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient normally has a value ranging from -1 to +1. The sign of the connection shows whether it is positive (as one variable increases, others rise as well) or negative (as one variable rises, others decrease).

According to Table 1, the independent variables relational psychological contract fulfillment and transactional psychological contract fulfillment have a strong association with the dependent variable employee engagement. Relational psychological contract fulfillment remained significantly and positively correlated with employee engagement ( $r=0.576$ ,  $p=0.00$ ), whereas transactional psychological contract fulfillment has a significant positive relationship with the dependent variable, employee engagement ( $r=0.223$ ,  $p=0.03$ ). As a result, in this city administration civil service office employee, employee engagement has a weak positive link with transactional psychological contract fulfillment and a significant positive relationship with relational psychological contract fulfillment. The study results clearly show that when relational psychological contracts are satisfied, employee engagement rises, and when transactional psychological contracts are fulfilled, employee engagement rises as well.

### Regression analysis

Regression analysis is a method that might be used to study the influence of one or more prognosticator variables on the dependent variable. It enables us to make assertions about how successfully one or more independent variables predicted the value of a dependent variable. This multiple linear regression was carried out to assess the considerable influence of psychological contracts on employee engagement.

As indicated in Table 2, all of the determinant aspects of the two independent variables, such as transactional and relational psychological contract fulfillment, explain 34.6% ( $R^2=0.346$ ) of the variation in the dependent variable, workers' engagement. This means that 34.76% of employee engagement administration is determined by the independent variables of psychological contract fulfillment, while the remaining 65.4% is determined by other factors not included in this study. In other words,  $F=45.946$  and  $\text{sig.} = .000$  in Table 3 below. The model was fit, and to determine if the regression model is substantially better at explaining the dependent variable (employee engagement), an ANOVA (analysis of variance) using the means as the best predictor is most appropriate.

**Table 1.** Correlation result.

		Correlations		
		Employee engagement	Relational contracts	Transactional contracts
Employee engagement	Pearson correlation	1		
	Sig. (two-tailed)			
	N	177		
Relational contracts	Pearson Correlation	.576	1	
	Sig. (two-tailed)	.000		
	N	177	177	
Transactional contracts	Pearson Correlation	.223	.190	1
	Sig. (two-tailed)	.003	.011	
	N	177	177	177

Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed). Source: own survey, 2022.

**Table 2.** Model summary.

Model	R	R square	Adjusted R square	Std. error of the estimate	Change statistics				
					R square change	F change	df1	df2	Sig. F change
1	.588 <sup>a</sup>	.346	.338	.50007	.347	45.946	2	174	.000

<sup>a</sup>Predictors: (Constant), Relational, Transactional Source: own survey, 2022.

**Table 3.** ANOVA<sup>a</sup> test table.

Model		Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig
1	Regression	22.980	2	11.490	45.946	.000
	Residual	43.512	174	.250		
	Total	66.492	176			

<sup>a</sup>Dependent Variable: Employee Engagement.

Source: own survey, 2022.

According to the results of [Table 4](#), it appears that the results of multiple regressions reveal that all independent factors statistically significantly impact the dependent variable. In other words, in the studied area, transactional psychological contract fulfillment has a major impact on employee engagement. This suggests that transactional psychological contract fulfillment has a weakly positive and significant effect on employee engagement, with standardized beta values of ( $= 0.066$ ,  $\text{sig} = 0.047$ ). In another way, the second independent variable, relational psychological contract fulfillment, has a significant positive influence on the dependent variable, workers' engagement, in the case of area employees, with standardized beta coefficients of ( $= 0.269$ ,  $\text{sig} = 0.000$ ). This demonstrates that the influence of independent factors on the dependent variable is considerable. This indicates that if there is a unit increase in relational psychological contract fulfillment, workers' engagement will grow by 0.554, and if there is a unit increase in transactional psychological contract fulfillment, employees' engagement will increase by 0.066.

## Discussion

The main goal of this investigation was to look at the impact of psychological contract fulfillment on staff engagement in the chosen city government. The Pearson correlation analysis approach was utilized to explore the connection between variables, and the multiple linear regression method was used to assess independent factors on workers' engagement in the research area. The dependent variable employee engagement shows a substantial link with the independent variables relational psychological contract fulfillment and transactional psychological contract fulfillment, according to the results of the correlational analysis. Thus, it shows that among employees in the study area, there is a weak positive significant relationship between relational psychological contract fulfillment and employee engagement as well as a weak positive significant relationship between transactional psychological contract fulfillment and employee engagement.

This finding is consistent with (Shi and Gordon, 2020), who discovered that under these two suboptimal conditions, managers feel both psychological contract breach (PCB) and poorer work engagement. Furthermore, managers have poorer job engagement while obtaining weaker psychological contract fulfillment. In addition, other researchers' psychological contracts were proven to have a substantial, positive influence on job engagement and trust (Braganza et al., 2021; Sheehan et al., 2019).

Furthermore, overall determinant factors or dependent variables such as transactional and relational psychological contract fulfilments account for 34.6% ( $R^2=0.347$ ) of the variation in the dependent variable, employee engagement. Although the remaining 65.4% of employee engagement is determined by factors not addressed in this study, In other words, the study used ANOVA (analysis of variance) to test the model's fitness, and the results show that  $F=45.946$  and  $\text{sig.} = 000$ , indicating that the model was fit and whether the regression model is significantly better at explaining the dependent variable (employee engagement). Finally, multiple regression analysis demonstrates that all independent factors

**Table 4.** Regression coefficients.

		Coefficients <sup>a</sup>			
		Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	
	Model	B	Std. Error	Beta	T
1	(Constant)	1.502	.181		8.318
	Relational contracts	.269	.030	.554	8.873
	Transactional contracts	.066	.035	.117	1.881
					Sig
					.000
					.000
					.047

<sup>a</sup>Dependent Variable: Employee Engagement.

Source: own survey, 2022.

possess a statistically meaningful impact on the variable that is being measured. In other words, psychological contract fulfillment has a major impact on employee engagement in the studied area.

The findings of Knapp et al. (2020) and (Rahman et al., 2017) have found a statistically significant effect of transactional and relational psychological contracts on employee engagement. Their finding supports this research finding. The study of Liu et al. (2020) also came up with a similar study finding stating job performance can be influenced both directly by transactional and relational psychological contract fulfillment. And their finding is consistent with this research result.

Like this study's finding, another study's results discovered that there is a strong beneficial effect of psychological contracts and psychological empowerment on employee engagement (Sandhya & Sulphey, 2021). The result (Rayton & Yalabik, 2014; Soares & Mosquera, 2019), contracts that are balanced and relational have a significantly positive impact on work engagement, while contracts that are transactional or transitional have a significantly negative impact. Therefore, it is recommended that human resource managers investigate employees' opinions of the psychological contract and identify the positive and/or negative ways that HRM practices influence these beliefs. Encouraging HR procedures that strengthen psychological and relational bonds is typically a good way to set up the framework for raising employee engagement at work. The structural model results are consistent with prior investigations; however, they are still preliminary due to small impact sizes.

Generally, the fulfillment of transactional psychological contracts has a mildly positive and significant impact on employees' engagement, whereas the fulfillment of relational psychological contracts strongly and significantly affects employees' engagement in this town. Additionally, employee involvement in civil service offices within this city is minimal. Consequently, it can be deduced that there exists a notable correlation between employee engagement and psychological contract fulfillment overall.

## Recommendation

In light of the study's findings, the researchers have made the following recommendations: According to the study described above, employee engagement and the independent components are substantially associated. Furthermore, psychological contracts have a significant influence on employee engagement. Relative to the two independent variables, it is observed that transactional contracts exert a positively significant influence on the dependent variable. However, it is the fulfillment of relational psychological contracts that emerges as the primary predictor of employee engagement, demonstrating a notably positive and significant impact on it. As a consequence, government employees would be wise to reconsider these contracts to alter their ways and actions to boost employee motivation or engagement at work. Furthermore, the result of this investigation suggests that there is a significant gap between what workers anticipate and what the organization delivers, as well as low employee engagement at work in the studied area. For the office to effectively analyze employee expectations and strive to meet them despite certain unattainable goals, the organization should address plausible reasons for not meeting them to employees straightforwardly and openly. Employees anticipate decent pay, an appealing work environment, fair administration, advancement, training, and assistance, fair performance awards, an open and fair decision-making system, and to be more interested in their job in the study area shortly. Administrators should consider these factors while developing their strategy. Minimizing violations or creating satisfied and motivated employees, can increase their engagement at work.

## Conclusion

The goal of this examination is to obtain evidence-based findings about how psychological contract fulfillment affects employee engagement within the framework of a particular Ethiopian municipal government civil service office. In this research, employee engagement is one dependent variable, and transactional and relational contracts are two independent factors. The statistical link between each independent variable and the dependent variable was carefully assessed and taken into consideration in the study to satisfy the research objectives. The study discovered that both of the independent variables significantly improved employee engagement in the study region after examining every parameter. Furthermore, the relational contract was the main driver of engagement. In general, it can be concluded that, for businesses to achieve their goals more successfully, the identified independent variables have an enormous effect on the dependent variable.

## Implications of the study

### *Theoretical implications*

This research can broaden the understanding of human resource management and psychology by demonstrating how to meet psychological contracts with employees to boost their motivation at work. In general, our findings are similar to most of those of other researchers' papers and don't support only a few previous findings on this topic, and they are important for highlighting current, exciting, and possibly successful areas of study to pursue in a competitive setting and came up with new conclusions by filling the gap in the literature.

### *Practical implications*

The paper's present outcome also advises organizations on how to be more competitive through staff management as well as tenacity and replenishment plans, and the researchers have also made pertinent suggestions for legislators/policymakers and other concerned entities. As a result, the study has significant practical implications for future policymakers and managers.

### *Originality value*

The originality value of the study lies in its exploration of psychological contracts and employee engagement within government sectors, specifically focusing on the Mersa region in Ethiopia. By delving into this context, the study addresses a significant gap in the literature, which has predominantly focused on developed countries' organizational settings. Through this exploration, the study contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of how cultural, social, and economic factors unique to regions like Mersa shape the formation, fulfillment, and consequences of psychological contracts. Moreover, by employing social exchange theory as a theoretical lens, the study offers novel insights into the nuanced interplay between contextual factors and employee attitudes and behaviors within government sectors. Thus, the originality value of the study lies not only in its exploration of an under-researched context but also in its theoretical framework, which sheds light on the intricacies of psychological contracts and employee engagement in diverse cultural settings, ultimately enriching the scholarly discourse in organizational psychology.

### *Limitations of the study*

One significant limitation of the study investigating the impact of psychological contracts on employee engagement in the Mersa Public sector, Ethiopia, stems from the characteristics of the sample, the cross-sectional nature of the study design, and organizational factors. Firstly, the sample's representativeness might be compromised due to its size and specificity to the Mersa Public sector, potentially limiting the generalizability of findings to broader populations within the public sector or other industries. Secondly, the cross-sectional design restricts the study from capturing data at a single point in time,



preventing the examination of changes or trends in psychological contract dynamics and employee engagement over time. Moreover, organizational factors such as culture, leadership, and structural dynamics could confound the observed relationships, challenging the interpretation of results and their applicability to other organizational contexts.

### ***Suggestions for future studies***

Future research in the realm of psychological contract and employee engagement within the Public sectors in Ethiopia could consider longitudinal investigations to track changes over time, qualitative inquiries to delve into underlying mechanisms, and comparative analyses across sectors or regions. Intervention studies aimed at enhancing psychological contract fulfillment and employee engagement, as well as examinations of cross-cultural variations and the impact of technology and work design, could provide valuable insights. Additionally, exploring the role of leadership, organizational climate, and trust in shaping psychological contract dynamics and employee engagement would deepen our understanding and inform tailored interventions and practices.

### **Authors' contributions**

'**TAW**' is involved in the analysis and interpretation of the data, '**AEE**' is involved in the conception and design, and drafting of the paper, '**JN**' is involved in editing, data analysis and revision '**MAK**' is involved in drafting and revision the work finally, '**NAB**' is involved in analysis, reviewing and final cross-checking the manuscript critically for important intellectual content. The authors agree to be accountable for all aspects of the work in ensuring that questions related to the accuracy or integrity of any part of the work are appropriately investigated and resolved.

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## Data availability statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author.

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